

## **Leadership Support: Co-Consulting**

### **The Purpose**

- Help a colleague learn more about a work issue that they find problematic so that they can think about how they might behave differently
- Develop consultancy skills to establish, manage and conclude a relationship designed to help another explore what is problematic without providing a solution
- Increase individual's understanding of how to be more effective

### **The Approach**

- This is based on asking questions, questions that encourage a deeper exploration of the issue that will identify alternative ways of behaving.

### **The Structure**

- Welcome and introductions
- Agree ground rules and the running order – below table and time allocation
- Each person in the group has the opportunity to take up the role of client whilst the others are the consultants

### **The Client**

- The client presents a real and current work problem or situation that is not neatly defined

### **The Consultant**

- The consultant's role is to establish a supportive and challenging consultancy relationship to help the client develop their understanding of what is going on and to think about what they might do to improve things

### **The Facilitator**

- The facilitator is responsible for time keeping and the structure of the session

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
4	The client sets out the problem without interruptions.
4	When they have finished, the consultant summarises what they have heard without evaluation. The consultant describes (briefly) their initial emotional/feeling response to the client's situation without entering into conversation.
5	The consultant asks clarifying questions to ensure their own understanding of the situation
7	The consultant asks open questions (see pages 3&4) that deepen the client's description of what is going on.
5	The consultant develops their explanations of what is going on and ideas about behaving differently. The client listens, trying to notice how they are responding in terms of their thoughts and feelings. (The client might want to write these down)
5	The client summarises how they are thinking and feeling about their issue. And, if possible, says something about how they might now behave.

## Useful Questions

To establish what is problematic

- How would you describe this situation?
- Who is involved? What happened?
- What has been tried to resolve it?
- What are people feeling and what are you feeling now?
- How does this problem relate to the wider organisation and who benefits from this problem?
- Who is this a problem for?
- What are the consequences of not resolving/improving this situation...what might be happening in a year's time?

To widen the description of what is going on:

- How did all this start?
- How did you feel when this happened?
- Who else is involved?
- If you imagine someone listening to your description what might they say about what is being left out?
- What would they add?
- Who benefits from this being a problem?
- What have you done so far and what effects has this had?

To establish connections between people and events:

- When A does...what do you do?
- What does A do next?
- What do you do when he doesn't listen to you?
- How do you know that he is not listening to you?
- Can you think of other explanations for his/her behaviour?

To understand how power is being used:

- Can you describe the hierarchy and how it operates in practice?
- Who has power in this situation?
- How do you feel their influence?
- What do they seem to value?
- What would it take to shift their view?
- Who has the power to resolve this situation?

To explore how meaning is constructed:

- You have described A as incompetent/unreliable etc, when are they not like that?
- What do you think is different in terms of them and you?
- Have you had to manage a similar situation in the past...how is this current situation different?
- What would you say are the norms around conflict/difference etc in this group?

Other powerful questions for refining the work-based experiment:

- What result do you want?
- What is your biggest difficulty or problem?
- How do you feel about this situation?
- What would you do differently?
- What do you want the other person to do differently?
- What judgements are you making about the other person and/or the situation?
- How do you know this?
- Can you explain that further?
- What would make the situation better?
- Other powerful questions for refining the work-based experiment: How does the situation affect you?
- What don't you know about the situation?
- What is the most extreme measure you could take?
- What is the best possible outcome from this situation?
- What's the issue?

- What makes it an issue now?
- How important is it on a 1-10 scale?
- What have you already tried?
- What's the ideal outcome?
- What is standing in the way of the ideal outcome?
- What's going right here (even if it is only a little bit)?
- What are the options for action here?
- What criteria would you use to judge the options?
- Which option seems the best one against those criteria?
- So what's the first/next step?
- When will you take it?